Karl Barth Society NEWSLETTER *Number 48 SPRING 2014*

Barth Society met in Baltimore November 22-23, 2013

Our meeting in **Baltimore** in conjunction with the **AAR** featured a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the **Friday afternoon** session were **W. Travis McMaken, Lindenwood University,** whose lecture was entitled: "***Definitive, Defective, or Deft? Reassessing Barth's Doctrine of Baptism in CD 4.4***" and **Hanna Reichel, University of Halle,** whose lecture was entitled: "***Catechesis Viatorum*: Karl Barth's Contextual Hermeneutics and the Heidelberg Catechism.**" **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** presided. The **Saturday morning** session featured a program entitled: **Ronald F. Thiemann *in Memoriam*.** Speakers were: 1) **Paul Dafydd Jones, University of Virginia,** whose lecture was entitled: "***Ronald Thiemann's Theologia Crucis: Between Martin Luther, Karl Barth and Hans Frei*;**" 2) **Shaun Allen Casey, Wesley Theological Seminary,** whose lecture was entitled: "***Ronald Thiemann and the Future of Public Theology*;**" 3) **Mara Willard, Harvard University,** "***Hope and Tragedy in Ronald Thiemann's Humble Sublime*;**" 4) **William Werpehowski, Villanova University,** offered a thoughtful and compelling reminiscence of Ronald Thiemann and his important theology. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** presided.

The Ninth Annual Barth Conference **will be held at Princeton Theological Seminary June 15-18, 2014. This Conference is entitled: "Karl Barth, The Jews, & Judaism" and is co-sponsored by *The Center for Barth Studies* at *Princeton Theological Seminary* and the *Karl Barth Society of North America*.**

For full Details and Registration, the Conference website is: http://www.ptsem.edu/barthconference/

What follows are some summaries and brief recaps of some lectures from the meeting in Baltimore.

Definitive, Defective, or Deft? Reassessing Barth's Doctrine of Baptism in *CD* 4.4

W. Travis McMaken
Lindenwood University
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In his presentation, McMaken reconsidered the reception of Barth's doctrine of baptism as advanced in *Church Dogmatics* IV/4. His argument unfolded in five stages.

First, McMaken identified Eberhard Jüngel and John Webster as paradigmatic for reception of Barth's doctrine of baptism. Whereas Jüngel finds in Barth's mature doctrine of baptism a definitive expression of Barth's most deeply held theological convictions about the relationship between God and humanity, Webster understands it to be defective insofar as it over-differentiates between divine and human action. McMaken suggested that these different approaches correspond to Brian Gerrish's categories of "symbolic parallelism" and "symbolic instrumentalism," and argues that they share a key

move—both Jüngel and Webster think that Barth shifts over the course of *Church Dogmatics* from an instrumentalist to a parallelist approach.

The second stage of McMaken's argument challenged that common assumption by providing a reading of the relation between divine and human action in *CD* I/1 and *CD* IV. While admitting that Barth changes some emphases and modes of expression, McMaken established that a clear instrumentalist strain remains in Barth's thinking even in *CD* IV. But he then went further to argue that the categories of instrumentalism and parallelism are insufficient for proper description of Barth's thought. This raises anew the question of how best to understand Barth's conception of the relation between divine and human action.

Third, McMaken advanced his own suggestion for how to talk about Barth's position—namely, "paradoxical identity." McMaken's argument in this stage developed through two sub-points. To begin, and against certain recent arguments in Barth studies, he argued that it is appropriate to speak of Barth's thought as Chalcedonian and to speak positively of his deployment of the "Chalcedonian Pattern." Time constraints prevented McMaken from presenting this aspect of his argument, but he summarized it by saying that Barth's thought is Chalcedonian at the level of judgment if not necessarily at the level of concept. It was in the second sub-point that McMaken developed his account of paradoxical identity as a way to describe how Barth thinks about the relationship between divine and human agency.

Here McMaken analyzed the conceptual difficulties involved in thinking about the relation between divine and human action in terms of either parallelism or instrumentalism, drawing on aspects of Barth's own analysis. Paradoxical identity is superior in this regard, according to McMaken, because it better articulates the dynamics of incarnation and the judgments of Chalcedon but—critically—in a way that is consistent with Barth's actualism.

In light of the preceding reconception of Barth's thinking on the relation between divine and human agency, McMaken turned in the fourth stage of his argument to a reconsideration of Barth's treatment of baptism in *Church Dogmatics* IV/4. The payoff of this reconception is that it enables one to read this portion of *CD* as deft rather than either merely definitive or defective as seen against the backdrop of parallelism or instrumentalism. In other words, it allows one to read Barth on his own terms. To this end, McMaken provided a close reading of certain passages in *CD* IV/4 that seem to imply a parallelist picture and showed instead that such passages were consistent with the account of paradoxical identity that he advanced previously.

The fifth and concluding stage of McMaken's argument considered how his reassessment of Barth's doctrine of baptism in *CD* IV/4 might impact future reception of this material and specifically the reception of Barth's rejection of infant baptism. Rather than seeing baptism as an exclusively human action, it is now possible to understand this human act as paradoxically identical to God's own act. McMaken suggested that his reassessment creates space for identifying the true point of departure for Barth's rejection of infant baptism, namely, his understanding of baptism as an individual's response to the gospel. For his own part, McMaken suggested that baptism might instead be conceived as the community's response to the gospel and as a way for the community to bear witness to the gospel.

Readers might want to consult the author's recently published book entitled, ***The Sign of the Gospel: Toward an Evangelical Doctrine of Infant Baptism after Karl Barth*** (Fortress Press, 2013).

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Catechesis Viatorum: Karl Barth's Contextual Hermeneutics and the Heidelberg Catechism

Hanna Reichel
University of Halle

Last year, the 450th anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism (HC) was celebrated. This important Reformed confession has been widely influential and also exerted an impact on Karl Barth. He interpreted this Catechism a number of times during his career. His first academic lecture in Göttingen was on the HC and he cited this document in his Barmen Declaration. He taught the Catechism from

1936-38 and 1944-47 and he used it to present doctrine at the university and in church contexts. His doctrine of Reconciliation, *CD* IV was shaped by insights from the HC.

Earlier in his career Barth was rather skeptical with regard to the HC. But over the years Barth developed a fondness for it. He especially focused on Jesus Christ and the doctrine of his threefold office. His appreciation of the HC can be seen from the fact that he read the document anew time and again; he was never really finished with it. He turned to it as a solid foundation of Reformed faith in each new context. One can therefore think of Barth's relation to the HC as a kind of "*catechesis viatorum*" which might also provide a model for our own dealing with tradition.

Göttingen (1921)

In Switzerland where Barth grew up, all authority of church confessions had been abolished in the nineteenth century. Hence, the HC exerted no influence on him during his childhood and early youth. As a student he studied liberal theological approaches and was not involved much with Reformed tradition. After his break with liberalism he sought a different theology that would not "howl with the wolves of war." He did not immediately turn to tradition at that point; rather he turned toward the Bible. The Word of God became his "guiding star." All human words must be subject to continual scrutiny and criticism. As a minister he was challenged by the task of teaching confirmation classes. "Maybe one day I will give it all up" he sighed. "Then I will return to the Heidelberg Catechism, make them memorize it and quiz them, just as our fathers have done." For the young Barth, returning to the HC was a theologically inferior and dubious way forward.

After the fame which followed his commentary on Romans, Barth was appointed chair of "reformed theology" at Göttingen and was urged by the dean to lecture on the HC, even though his initial plan had been to teach biblical classes on Paul's theology. Barth did not directly begin with the HC but laid the groundwork for understanding the nature of theology. In connection with the HC Barth notes that "Most of the things people usually admire about it are not good at all." Most of what people consider valuable in the HC he considered to be weak points. Those who thought they could find a formula for the unity of the protestant church in the HC were, in Barth's view, "compromising the substance of Calvinist doctrine." In Barth's mind the HC had lost substance because people's emphasis was incorrectly shifted from a search for God to a search for "the human being and human happiness." One might even say that "for Barth, the pursuit of happiness is *the* modern heresy." In this regard the HC was a modern text and Barth was critical of it.

Despite these criticisms, Barth read the HC once more to show that one could find another meaning in it—one that counters the history of its reception and modernity itself. Barth insists that the real center of the HC is to be found in the fact that we belong to Jesus Christ, the Savior. One must first speak about Jesus Christ and only then about human beings. Barth spent half the semester attempting to read the first question of the HC from this perspective. So he essentially read the first question backwards—instead of focusing on the humanist call to return to basics, Barth focused on Jesus Christ, the savior of humanity and transformed the HC into a reformed creed. Having done this, he could regard HC as providing reformed doctrine, albeit with some reservations.

Reading the HC in Barmen 1934

Barth struggled to formulate a reformed understanding of the concept "confession" in the 1920's. This struggle took place especially in relation to the rise of German National Socialism and the need to oppose Nazi interference in the church. In drafting the "Barmen Declaration" Barth did not focus on the authority of "specific confessional texts" but on "Jesus Christ, as he is attested for us in holy scripture." He is the "one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and in death." This echoed the emphasis he had previously developed in connection with the HC.

While Barth had earlier criticized the HC for "blurring denominational differences," he now finds denominational openness to be something positive. Belonging to Christ cuts across denominational differences. It also means that any other claims to sovereignty other than that of Jesus Christ himself must be rejected. This had political and theological consequences. According to Reichel this made the Barmen Declaration an "interesting document of contextual theology." While the context clearly

concerned the German church under Nazi rule, it certainly was not the context that dictated the content of the declaration. It was the authority of the Word, of Jesus Christ which was decisive and not that of the *Führer*. Accordingly, the one context, Jesus, the Word replaced the other—this was to that extent a counter-textual document.

According to Reichel, the HC was the model and predecessor for this document in the sense that the HC was not an authority, but could be seen to serve as a model in "choosing the right authority" in that it should exemplify any theology which is exclusively oriented "by and in Jesus Christ." Barth did not appeal to the authority in formulating the Barmen Declaration but placed it on the same basis as the HC in a "parallel act of Confessing Jesus Christ." Thus, Barth could stress that any theology not grounded in the Word of God, that is, in Jesus Christ "can never appeal to the Heidelberg Catechism."

Reading the HC in Basel 1938

After leaving Bonn in 1935 when he refused to take an oath of fealty to Hitler, Barth returned to Basel and considered the HC again. In the fall of 1938 with Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia imminent, Barth wrote an open letter to Josef Hromádka in Prague calling for active resistance to the Nazis, including military resistance. He said that every Czech soldier who fights and dies in this cause will do so "for the Church of Jesus Christ as well." German battalions may be stronger but the only lasting confidence comes from Jesus Christ, the Word of God who is the only comfort in life and in death. While he considered the concept of comfort found in the HC appallingly modern and anthropocentric in 1921, he now takes it up and uses it to point to God's glory and to oppose any imminent historic developments.

As a result of this letter, Barth was denounced as the "warmonger professor" in the media. At this time Barth gave a lecture for religious education teachers on the HC and further explicated what he meant by "comfort." While Barth focused mainly on the "central question" in 1921 which was belonging to Christ, now his main focus was on the "comfort" which he had previously criticized. His focus now was on: "Who is the comforter?"; "Who is being comforted?"; and "What is the comfort?" His focus was of course Christocentric and soteriological with a view toward stressing that Jesus Christ is the absolute authority who places human beings in the midst of immense responsibility. Barth notes questions 31 and 32, "Why is he called Christ?" and "Why are you called a Christian?" In this connection Barth discusses the threefold office of Christ. It is Christ's work which is the comfort for believers and the threefold office becomes the venue for discussing the Christian life, that is, the life of the comforted. At this point Barth explicitly identifies the Christian with Christ saying "As a member of Christ in faith, the believer himself is 'actually a Christ himself.'" Christians are said to borrow their identity from Christ as they are a "living reference to Christ." No separation between confession of Christ and the life Christians live is possible. Faith therefore means "confessing, thanksgiving, standing up." Extreme focus on Christ "in itself has consequences for christian practice and politics."

In 1938 Barth leaves to one side the doctrines of satisfaction (HC questions 12-18), creation and providence (HC questions 26-8) and the "Extra-Calvinisticum" (HC question 47f.) even though he had treated these before. At this point in history Barth wanted to focus on the centrality of Christ and not on denominational divisions. This, according to Reichel, could be seen to mirror the HC itself in its attempt to formulate a "common ground" while simultaneously avoiding "formulations that might stir sectarian strife."

Reading the HC in Bonn 1947

After the war, Barth read the HC before students at Bonn as a visiting professor. The majority of these students had been National Socialists only months before. He insists that the HC should not be obeyed blindly but should be granted reverence and gratitude as a good confession "from the fathers of our evangelical church." Barth noted that this was a work of a community that presented a "common evangelical comprehension" and embodied the "substance of the reformation." Evangelical in Barth's understanding simply referred to the fact that the confession was grounded in and shaped by the gospel which is the good news of Jesus Christ "as attested in Holy Scripture." Since Christ was the true authority, the focus was not on the HC but on Christian doctrine. Barth was not interested in a kind of "Heidelberg orthodoxy." Nor was he interested in relativizing history. As long as the HC

is seen to be grounded in Christ, it can function as a tool and assist in the quest for Christian doctrine. In this way it can assist in pointing to the common Christian faith and not just reformed doctrine.

These lectures took place in the midst of the ruins of the war. Barth did not "shake the foundations" as he did in the 1920's. Pastoral care and a constructive agenda led Barth to consider the HC without trying to convince people that the HC completely coincided with his own theology. Instead he openly explains where he agrees and disagrees with the HC. His most important correction is to "universalize the promise of God" so that the boundaries of sectarianism and religion could be marginalized. Accordingly, God's promise encompasses "not only Christians, but especially the Jews and eventually the whole world." These Bonn lectures stressed building "foundations for a reorientation" now that all had crumbled. It is in this context that Barth now presented the questions of the HC as central points or nails that needed to be driven home.

Conclusion

In her conclusion Hanna Reichel highlighted four characteristics of Barth's reading of the HC for our theology today.

1. Barth was not looking for a confession that is universal and abstract. Speaking within a specific context, he chose a confession that was pertinent to him as someone who was active in the reformed tradition in Germany in order to speak within that context.

2. Barth's faithfulness to the HC discloses an ecumenical openness. The HC specifically does not focus on sectarian demarcation but on "trying to highlight the shared heritage: the reference to Jesus Christ, as shown in Q1." Jesus Christ as the Lord is the common ground that Barth can confess with both Reformed and Lutheran churches. He might call "any reformed brother who says 'Christ and x' a heretic."

3. The exclusive focus on Jesus Christ is what gains Barth's attention and respect. This is what gives his theology an "imminent political dimension." The fact that we belong to Christ implies that any absolutist claims "of any other powers and authorities, 'events, powers, historic figures and truths'" must be rejected.

4. Finally, with the different readings of the HC, we can see that Barth's theology was a *theologia viatorum*. It might be called a *catechesis viatorum* inasmuch as Barth never started in "empty air" but with works interpreting and reinterpreting texts for specific audiences by looking for new starting points and keys to reading the HC. In that way Barth discovered new dimensions for his presentations. In 1921, Barth focused on the tension between the question and answer of the first question in the HC; in 1934, he focused on the parallel act of confession; in 1937, it was the act of reading diagonally that captured his attention; in 1938 it was the term "comfort"; in 1946 it was the threefold office of Christ and in 1947 it was the "seven nails" that helped his reconstruction. With each new reading Barth was always systematic and always allowed each key to focus his reading. Beginning always with Jesus Christ as the Word of God attested in Holy Scripture allowed Barth the freedom to engage in this kind of theology. It inspired him to new ways of formulating doctrine.

Interpreting the HC, Barth once said "In theology we think." But theology does not begin with thinking. It starts with reading. Reichel concluded by suggesting that maybe we today can continue to read the great texts of our tradition responsibly in a way that leads to knowledge of the truth. Theology today can do this as it confesses over against the powers of the world; as it is contextual in method and ecumenical in outlook, as well as political in consequence. In this way theology stays faithful to the confessions and catechisms. It is a kind of *catechesis viatorum*. It is in this way that Barth's reading and re-reading the HC can be a lesson to us.

Congratulations to **Meehyun Chung** on the publication of her book ***Reis Und Wasser: Eine Feministische Theologie in Korea***. Berlin: Frank & Timme, 2012 (226 pages, $41.37). This book won the Marga Buehrig Prize from Switzerland for excellence in feminist theology.

Book Reviews

God the Eternal Contemporary: Trinity, Eternity, and Time in Karl Barth. Adrian Langdon. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-61097-998-6 Pp. viii + 222. Paperback, $25.00.

Adrian Langdon has written a fine book. What makes it fine is that it is not only a responsible reading of Barth, but at points creatively extends Barth in a way that is largely indebted to Barth's own best insights. Originally a dissertation written under Professor Douglas Farrow of McGill University, Langdon demonstrates the extent to which, for Barth, "eternity is a description of God's electing and perichoretic life as Father, Son, and Spirit, before, with, and in created temporality" (75). Barth's account overcomes the babylonian captivity of eternity to paradigms inimical to the Gospel by forming "analogies between the eternal relations of Father, Son, and Spirit and God's relation to the created order" (89). The point is a fairly simple but profound one: in God's life are past, present, and future simultaneously, this being the basis for the work of God outward in creating, preserving, and perfecting creaturely life. Said differently, for Barth, "the times of Father, Son, and Spirit correspond or are analogous to the life and roles of the triune persons *in se*" (184).

Where Barth succeeds, so Landon argues, is in identifying eternity as the life of Father, Son, and Spirit, and so "with reference to the content of Christian faith" (187). Langdon adjudges Barth's rigorous christocentrism to be his greatest strength. Accordingly, "Jesus-history is definitive for the full breadth of God's pretemporal, supratemporal, and posttemporal activity and life" (192). Where Barth is less successful is with respect to his presentation of the eternal Spirit "as the bond of contemporaneity" (192). Jesus Christ's time is that of recapitulating time, while the Spirit's time is ecclesial time. That Langdon senses the Spirit gets shortchanged in such a construal is not surprising, following as he does the well worn criticisms of those like Colin Gunton who aver that Barth neglects the Spirit. So Langdon: "It is not that Barth views the time of the community as void of the Spirit's work in ecclesial practice, but that the connection between these practices and the transformative and qualitative nature of ecclesial time is neglected. Therefore, a trinitarian account of the relation of eternity and time ought to include a more robust account of the Spirit's work in ecclesial time" (203).

Langdon appreciates Barth's anchoring of his account of eternity in God's movement *in se* and his gracious movement *ad extra*, but is worried that the salutary impulses of such a move are hamstrung by "a lack of exegesis and consideration of the Spirit in general" (204). To describe the Spirit as "the *vinculum* of contemporaneity, creating the history of the community to correspond and thus participate in Jesus-history" is inadequate (184). Christology does all the work, with the Spirit's work being reduced to "the subjective realization of the objective" (161). Negative consequences of this over-privileging of the Son arise downstream, insofar as "struggles with the ascension and the heavenly session" are concerned (149). "They [ascension and session] are only discussed in relation to the resurrection and often in fine print sections" (149).

All told, where Barth's account succeeds is with regard to the rigor with which he thinks about the God-world relation in light of the incarnation. This "relational view" circumvents attempts to think God's eternity as isolated from the way in which God comes among us in Christ and the Spirit so as to seek and to save (200). Where, on Langdon's reading, Barth's account misfires is in Barth's allowing Christology to overwhelm pneumatology, which in turn generates an account of the church and of the session of our Lord that does not avail itself of the resources provided by the Spirit's movement *ad extra*, the Spirit's evoking of practices transparent to the Spirit's time.

Langdon's account is to be commended on the grounds of the clarity and rigor of his exposition of the material. One walks away from reading it with a rich sense of how Barth sought to rethink God's eternity in the light of the movement internal to God, God's inner life, and therefore God's gracious movement toward what is not God, the creation. Where it could be improved is with respect to the originality and rigor of the criticisms harnessed against Barth which are largely those of Gunton. Barth does offer an extensive account of the Spirit's work in the gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the Christian community in *CD* IV. This of course Langdon knows and expounds. Barth takes up the Johannine emphasis that the Spirit's work is to take what is Christ's and to declare it to us. Barth's pressing of the self-effacing character of the Spirit's work in a manner transparent to the Spirit's procession in God as the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father may not, in my judgment, be so easily labeled as under-determined. What needs to be demonstrated is a better rationale for why Barth thinks the Spirit should be "christologized" in the way Barth indeed does. What tract of Christian teaching

provides us with the resources for thinking a more determined account of the Spirit? This question Langdon does not answer. Were his book to be even better than it is, it would have been appropriate to provide an account of where in the doctrine of God and of the Trinity one might find resources with which to overcome this under- determination.

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Barth and Rationality: Critical Realism in Theology. D. Paul La Montagne. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-61097-656-5. Pp. xii + 235. $27.00 Paperback.

Someone with a crystal ball in 1968 would surely have been astounded to see the long shelf of new books on Karl Barth's theology nearly a half-century after his death. Barth himself, who never tired of teaching that theological method can only be theologically described, might have wondered at the number of those books that attempt to interpret the method, logic, theory, or rationality employed in his theology. Indeed, he might suspect that those interpreters had missed his point altogether, by seeking to find some way of making his theology seem plausible to those who do not share his presuppositions. Must not theologians be willing simply to leap into the "virtuous circle" of theology and leave behind every attempt to relate it to other intellectual endeavors?

Before deciding that question, serious students of Karl Barth need to hear what D. Paul La Montagne has to say. This interpreter of Barth's theological method comes to the table with a quite different background from most. Before turning to theology in graduate school, La Montagne was an award-winning student of mathematics in college with a keen interest in the philosophy of mathematics and the epistemological questions raised by the foundational role of mathematics in the natural sciences. As a graduate student at Princeton Theological Seminary, he encountered Bruce McCormack's critically realistic interpretation of Barth's dialectical theology and decided to bring these two enterprises into conversation: the relationship between theology and science, and the kind of rationality exhibited in Barth's theology. The resulting dissertation, revised and expanded, has now appeared as *Barth and Rationality: Critical Realism in Theology*. Its aim is to demonstrate that Barth's critically realistic theology can be defended against charges that it is irrational, subjectivist, positivistic, or otherwise vulnerable to philosophical critique.

La Montagne's book is designed to extend McCormack's argument in *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (1996) by carrying out a task that McCormack recognized but declined to pursue: comparing the critical realism of Barth's dialectical theology with the critical realism advocated by various philosophers over the past century. The aim of this comparison is to obtain a clearer picture of the model of rationality lying behind Barth's theology. La Montagne insists that this enterprise will not enable one to conclude that Barth's theology is true. But he does believe that it succeeds in defending Barth against charges that his theology is irrational or otherwise defective philosophically.

He begins the task by providing a detailed account of the origins of critical realism in philosophy and its outworkings in the scientific realism that has dominated philosophy of science for the past half-century, eclipsing completely the positivist understanding of science that preceded it. He offers a typology of the different strands of critical realism and shows how they have transformed the prevailing view of the history and practice of the sciences. Especially important has been the influence of Thomas S. Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970). The outcome of these developments has been a broad consensus that scientific knowledge is not simply a direct offprint of reality but is inevitably shaped by social construction. Reality nevertheless retains the ability to "surprise" us in ways that do not conform to our current theories or working assumptions. As a result, science is seen by philosophers today as a kind of chastened realism midway between naive realism and the kind of antirealism that sees all scientific knowledge merely as the product of social construction. La Montagne goes on to describe the debate about the mathematical underpinnings of science (his own particular interest), concluding that the effectiveness of mathematics in exploring and describing the world is not unreasonable but should be seen as "the art of imagination made rigorous and exhibited in formal demonstration so as to communicate itself as public knowledge and not private inspiration" (76).

Before taking up his main task—the elucidation of the critically realistic quality of Barth's theology in relation to critical realism in philosophy—La Montagne inserts an additional piece of background:

an analysis Barth's Kantianism. Without claiming that he worked from a consciously articulated philosophy, La Montagne teases out the philosophical background implicit in his theology. What he finds is a position that is Kantian in a loose sense while insisting that theological discourse about God's revelation is realistic in intent without being able to grasp that reality directly. The result is a dialectical realism that eschews pure realism on the one hand and pure idealism on the other.

The payoff to this lengthy survey of critical realism comes in the final three chapters of the book, where La Montagne describes Barth's "dialectical critical realism," distinguishes it from its cousin in the philosophy of science, and then uses it to defend Barth against some of his harshest critics. He concludes that Barth's theological practice is "similar and parallel" to the critical realism one finds in philosophy without being identical to it. Their difference stems from the different nature of their objects. Barth's "dialectical reservation" about our knowledge of theology's object—God's self-revelation—"does not mean that we do not have real knowledge [of God], but only that that knowledge must be held in a critical fashion that does not mistake its correspondence to the Word of God for direct possession . . ." (149). This dialectical critical realism is not the same as the critical realism of the philosophers but shares important characteristics with it. La Montagne sees Barth's kind of critical realism as "an epistemological consequence of the doctrine of grace" (151).

The first of the three "classic criticisms" of Barth that La Montagne examines is the charge of "revelational positivism," first adumbrated by Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his prison letters and later developed more rigorously by Wentzel van Huyssteen. La Montagne defends Barth against the charge of positivism by showing that his theology is not a species of epistemological foundationalism but is better understood as "postfoundational," since he never treats the object of theology as an incorrigible given under the control of the theologian. Rather, Barth is a critical realist (though he himself did not think in these terms), one who knows that his work is always under judgment, always susceptible to correction and revision. The evidence for this defense of Barth is his insistence that the object of theology remains mysterious even in its revealedness and that theology can therefore never become a closed system. It is also bolstered by Barth's actualism, his insistence that the revelation which theology seeks to describe always has the character of an ongoing event rather than a changeless substance. For this reason Barth always stressed that theological discourse must be dialectical, constantly shifting from thesis to antithesis, even to the point where it might appear to be simply paradoxical or contradictory. This method is necessary because God's revealedness, though knowable in part, always remains mysterious, beyond the decisive grasp of the theologian. The misunderstanding of Barth as a theological positivist stems from the deeply-rooted error (especially in the Anglo-Saxon world) of seeing his theology as a neoorthodoxy capable of extracting unchangeable truth from the text of the Bible. The appearance of subjectivism is unavoidable, because theology will always appear subjective to any observer who stands outside the continuing miracle of God's self-revelation that the theologian seeks to describe.

The second criticism of Barth's theology—that it is irrational—is posed by W. W. Bartley III in his 1962 book *The Retreat to Commitment*, in which he proposes an important modification of Karl Popper's program for determining the rationality of truth claims. La Montagne applauds Bartley's revision, which requires that the philosophical standard of rationality no longer be regarded as a demand for rational justification but rather as a willingness to subject itself to critique. The challenge to Barth's theology, therefore, is to determine whether it is "criticizable" or employs an "immunization strategy" that renders it immune to criticism. Bartley had concluded that Barth's position is indefensible because it tries to use a rational argument to defend a merely subjective commitment. La Montagne counters that Bartley's attack fails because he misreads Barth's theology as a form of neoorthodoxy, and he offers some intriguing passages from the *Church Dogmatics* as evidence that Barth believed the theologian to be unprotected against the possibility of error. Barth, La Montagne concludes, is "a rational believer in something that may yet turn out to be false." And falsity, of course, is something quite different from irrationality.

The third criticism brought against Barth's theology—that it is subjectivist—has been lodged by Wolfhart Pannenberg, who restates a critique originally formulated by Heinrich Scholz in the 1930's. La Montagne's defense against it, however, shows it to be not so much an additional criticism as another way of stating the charges of positivism and irrationality, both of which Pannenberg shares. Pannenberg acknowledges Barth's intent to give an objective account of God's revelation but believes that he fails in that endeavor, claiming that "Barth's unmediated starting from God and his revealing word turn out to be no more than an unfounded postulate of theological consciousness." La Montagne denies that Barth's

starting point is unmediated, since it stems from the "anomalies" he encountered in liberal theology and is also found in the historical confessions of the church. Once again he appeals to Barth's critical realism to defend him against the charge that his theology is subjectivist or irrational. His critics make the mistake of thinking that because he has abandoned standard logic in favor of dialectical reasoning he has abandoned all logic: "he is only opting for a *non-standard* logic," writes La Montagne, "not no logic or no rationality at all" (210).

La Montagne argues in his conclusion that the real issue at stake in Karl Barth's theology is not about his alleged positivism or irrationality but rather about the doctrine of revelation. Is Barth's theology, he asks, "a faithful explication of what revelation is" (214)? One may answer that question in the affirmative, however, without settling the question of Barth's critical realism. That his theological intent is *realist* appears to be beyond doubt; the more difficult question is what it means to call that realism *critical*. La Montagne rightly stresses that the event of revelation is always miraculous and that it can only be received and known in obedience. Both these features will always provoke skepticism and resistance in a culture like ours, whose model of rational thinking is the empirical sciences. *Barth and Rationality* is the best account I know of Barth's theological method in terms that make it understandable to those who stand outside the faith. But the very clarity of La Montagne's explication makes unmistakable the vast difference between the kind of critical realism exemplified in Karl Barth's theology and the kind practiced in the world of secular modernity. Barth himself seems to have felt little need to try to bridge that gap; indeed, he always resisted the apologetic urge to minimize the great divide between worldly knowing and the knowledge of God in his revelation. Like Kierkegaard, an early source of his theological inspiration, he knew that it was finally both impossible and undesirable to try to lessen or remove the offense of the gospel. La Montagne's clarification of Barth's critical theological realism may help his contemporary readers to see that he is not some kind of irrational theological positivist, but it ought also to show them just how radical the claim of Christian theology really is.

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The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God? Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2011. ISBN 978-0-8028-6533-5. Pp. vii-440. Edited by Thomas Joseph White, O.P.

Father White has done theological scholarship a considerable service with the editing and arrangement of this mostly well-written and well-researched collection of essays on the topic of analogy. The essays had their origins in an ecumenical conference convened on the campus of the Catholic University of America, in conjunction with the John Paul II Institute, in April 2008. This collection for the most part captures very well the ecumenical spirit of the conference. White also makes a considerable contribution of his own with the "Introduction" and a further essay, about which we shall comment below.

In his "Introduction" White is interested in establishing a new sense of ecumenical spirit that, in his opinion, seems to be gathering around the theme of the *analogia entis*. The ostensible ground for the discussion is the nature, substance and outcomes of the debate between Karl Barth, (playing the role of denier) and Erich Przywara, whose view is to be seen as "the wisdom of God." Both responses to the *analogia entis* in the early 20th century must be understood as their relative attempts to come to grips with the status of theological knowledge after the Enlightenment, especially with respect to "the conditions of possibility for Christian belief and discipleship in a deeply secularized age" (3). In White's mind, the ongoing treatment of analogy is important because it forms part of the significant resources with which Christianity can respond to "post Christian modernity" thereby "bearing witness with a united scriptural and apostolic voice" regarding the triune mystery of God and his redemption of creation (31). The resemblance that the various essays have to this well-articulated and ideally envisioned "Introduction," however, bespeaks other realities regarding this scarcely unified voice. One might wish that such unity were the actual state of affairs with respect to analogy.

White helpfully organizes his collection of essays into four sections beginning with a reconsideration of "the theological contours of the original debate." This section contains chapters by John R. Betz and Bruce L. McCormack, both of whom, one would assume, are to set the terms of the debate for both Catholics and Protestants, respectively. Betz's chapter is thorough, well written and draws upon some considerable research. His goal is to reintroduce Erich Przywara's *Analogia Entis* in a way that is free of the dreadful

Barthian "misreading." The ultimate goal of this essay is to demonstrate how natural and "Catholic" it was that the philosophical principle of *analogia entis* should also become, through the Augustinian-Thomistic development of theological epistemology, a principle that has been at the heart of "true Catholic theology" since the earliest fathers, including the apostle Paul (86f). This is the "fundamental form of Catholic theology" (87). The essay is also a useful survey of the broader issues relating to the Catholic perspective on analogy, but hardly constitutes the final Catholic perspective. It is merely an idiosyncratic perspective when all is said and done.

Bruce McCormack's chapter, on the other hand, constitutes a significant argument for re-reading both Barth and Przywara on analogy, from a fresh perspective. Far from being a mere "yes and no" to the Roman Catholic position, his emphasis on "Karl Barth's Version of an Analogy of Being," casts the contemporary understanding of both scholars in a different light. Barth's so-called "change of mind" was not a matter directly related to his view of Przywara's *analogia entis*. "Barth did not, as is sometimes alleged, change his mind on that score" (89). Rather, the change that is to be noted with respect to Barth's treatment of analogy must be related to a shift within the *Dogmatics* itself. It was, in fact, a shift in Barth's own understanding of the analogy of being that does include a conception of the *analogia entis* within an *analogi fidei*. Contrary to Balthasar and Przywara, however, Barth's version of the "*analogia entis*," contained within an *analogia fidei*, can be "recognized only where the relation of God to the human Jesus is kept in view, and that means: on the basis of his later Christology" (91). Hence, Barth's version of the "analogy of being" is not the one "von Balthasar tried to carve out of the *analogia relationis* of the *Church Dogmatics* III/1" (91). The establishment of this bold thesis marks a significant contribution in Barth studies and requires at least a re-evaluation of the Przywara-Balthasar thesis that Barth's *analogia fidei* conceals an *analogia entis*.

According to McCormack, "Barth's Version of the *Analogia Entis*," which McCormack sketches in Part IV, is now to be understood afresh from his doctrine of election as its root. It is a "relation of correspondence to be realized actualistically," and grounded in the "eternal act of decision that Barth makes of his concept of analogy (as correspondence) to be an analogy of *being*" (123). This solution to the problem has hardly been settling though, given the reaction from some of McCormack's colleagues in the Karl Barth Society, especially George Hunsinger and Paul Molnar. For good reasons the latter think this reading of Barth is far too Hegelian. Nevertheless, this version of Barth's treatment of the analogy of being constitutes a considerable challenge to the Przywara-Balthasar reading, and it must be also seen as a contribution to the sometimes too entrenched view of Barth on the Protestant side.

But there is more! In the second section, which White describes as "ecumenical proposals," there are three essays. One by Kenneth Oakes; another by Richard Schenk, O.P.; the third offering is by Peter Casarella. All three of these essays take an ecumenical approach to analogy that is worth considering, especially the efforts of Richard Schenk. Kenneth Oakes' paper, "The Cross and the *Analogia Entis* in Erich Przywara" is an interesting take on Przywara's more exegetical works, for which he is apparently unknown. What emerges in his more exegetical works, on Scripture, Augustine and the Ignatian *Exercises*, is a clear "*theologia crucis*" that is not all that different from Martin Luther's. In Oakes' opinion, the discussion among the various Catholic and Protestant positions should continue, but especially in the more Christological direction (171).

Casarella's chapter on "Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Problem of the Catholic *Denkform*" proposes that Balthasar's book on Karl Barth was really an ecumenical effort designed to shift the terms of the debate from theological method to one of theologically integrative style (192-93). In contrast to Barth's rhetorical approach, Balthasar espouses an integrative Catholicism, wherein Catholic thought is enriched in the critical-integrative inclusion of theologians like Karl Barth. In this respect the difference between Barth and Przywara on this issue could be an opportunity to extend such a Catholic "Denkform" (199). According to his analysis, Przywara pointed us in the right direction, metaphysically, but stopped short of the Christology needed to ground the *analogia entis* (204-5). Balthasar's approach moves in this direction, beyond Przywara, and thus represents a revised Catholic *Denkform* in terms of the integration of all truth (205).

Richard Schenk's chapter represents perhaps the best effort in ecumenical terms. His approach amounts to a more charitable reading of Barth's concern with Przywara's understanding through a reappropriation to the Thomistic principle of nature and grace. In fact, the whole conversation may be characterized as an effort in "ecumenical learning" in which there is an affirmation and an admonition. He proposes, correctly, that Barth's initial engagement with Przywara's use of *analogia entis* "arrived at a sympathetic (or convergent) reading" of the scholastic

tradition but also at "the ultimate rejection of this Catholic principle." It would be, for Przywara, on the other hand, an ecumenical learning with respect to Luther's *theologia crucis* (174). For Gottleib Söhngen, says Schenk, it was an exercise in relearning the *fideistic* basis of rationality. In a sense this "ecumenical learning" is ingredient in the Thomistic principle of nature and grace. Following the divine economy, analogy reminds us of "the mysteriousness of God" and "the world" as a meaning evident, yet not given. Analogy, on either the Protestant or Catholic side, is most open to an ecumenical dialogue when it keeps this shared mystery in mind (191).

The ordering of the chapters makes good sense thus far, first introducing the broad lines of the debate, then, preparing the ground for an ecumenical discussion. It stands to reason that section III would be about historical *resourcement*, though here the slant is decidedly Catholic and Thomistic, thus obviating some of the ecumenical ground. Reinhard Hütter heads this list with an historical reconstruction (or re-lecture [sic]) with respect to analogy in Thomas Aquinas, and with particular reference to causality (209f.). For the most part this essay is exactly what it claims to be, a "re-lecture" that summarizes nicely the discussion within Thomism; but it does not go beyond this to add any new light on Aquinas' position.

The same can be said for the essay by Bruce Marshall, which rounds out this section. He focuses on the principle of Christology as the "end of analogy" (281). His essay stresses Thomas Aquinas' use of the term analogy, especially the connection between analogy in the *prima pars* and the Christological *univocity* in the *tertia pars* (281). In his understanding, the natural knowledge of God in Aquinas is significantly subordinated, almost obliterated, by this Christological turn in the *tertia pars*. Many scholars would have problems with this reading of Aquinas, not the least of which is the misunderstanding of the programmatic nature of the *prima pars* for the whole of the *Summa*.

The signature contribution to this section was the editor's own essay, "'Through Him all things were made' (John 1:3): The Analogy of the Word Incarnate According to St. Thomas Aquinas and its Ontological Presuppositions." White wants to establish the possibility that we will always be, "implicitly or explicitly" committing ourselves to an *analogia entis* because "the theological analogy of the Incarnate Word (the *logos ensarkos*) is not fully intelligible, even as a specifically Christian and dogmatic notion without the capacity to ascribe to God analogical notions of being and unity, in comparison with creatures" (249). Of course such notions must assume "a real ontological resemblance between creatures of God that is naturally intelligible to the human intellect without formal recourse to divine revelation" (249), which is precisely the point of employing a bare principle of the analogy of being. White tries to establish this thesis first by means indicating the precise nature of Aquinas' conception of the Incarnate Logos, who is to be seen as "the unoriginate (uncreated) ground or cause of existence in creatures" (250). Secondly, such a conception of the transcendent, Incarnate Word, calls for certain metaphysical assumptions, one of which is the *analogia entis*, without which "his presence in history would be for us utterly inconceivable . . . and therefore, ultimately meaningless" (267). Finally, the thesis here is that the incarnate Logos requires a metaphysical principle of *analogia entis* that is established by virtue of the fact that the "divine revelation presupposes a minimal distinction between natural and supernatural modes of knowledge." Here is precisely where the ontological weight of an *analogia entis* must be brought to bear in terms of participation (278). This is not the place to argue contrary to White, but surely this final principle begs the question of his commitment to the primacy and non-alterability of God's revelation of himself, as he is, without creation. Here again the problem of the knowledge of God emerges and remains unresolved by means of analogy.

The essay by Martin Bieler rounds out this section with a reflection on Ferdinand Ulrich's understanding of the *analogia entis* as "an expression of love." It is interesting and well written, but the book would hardly have suffered without it.

The final section of the book appropriately attempts to point the way forward to "the renewal of contemporary theology" in respect to the *analogia entis*. The last essay, offered by David Bentley Hart, titled, "The destiny of Christian Metaphysics," is the least helpful in pointing out this new way (395). It is merely a retrenchment of the anti-Protestant sentiment held by some Catholic and Orthodox scholars who just cannot understand and/or abide the Protestant objections to what appears to them to be a "broadly obvious," and "perfectly Biblical" principle (395). By "analogy" he means specifically Przywara's principle of the *analogia entis*. In his usual entertaining, bombastic and pejorative way he sweeps aside as "total nonsense" the objections brought to Przywara's understanding by Barth and other critics (396). For all of his flourish, his clever use of neologisms, and his excellent prose, I found his offering with respect to

metaphysics rather lacking in "substance," if you will pardon the pun.

Michael Hanby's offering, on the other hand, is much more useful in that it helps us access Hans Urs von Balthasar's approach as a touchstone for future discussion of analogy. Unfortunately, it pretty much ignores many of the criticisms that have been leveled at Balthasar's interpretation of Barth since Bruce McCormack's *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology.*

Another piece in this section comes from the pen of John Webster, whose "Perfection and Participation," is perhaps the most sagacious of the lot. Webster's concern is that, in respect to theology, it is the properly dogmatic material that should drive the agenda in any given instance (379). In the current circumstances the principle of participation, which he takes to be anterior to dogmatics due to its "slender" biblical support, seems to have displaced, in a way detrimental to dogmatics, the material concern for God's perfection; that is, his life as "limitless abundance . . . sheer plenitude . . . as Father, Son and Holy Spirit" (380). The question often raised from other quarters is whether or not such a view of God's perfection leaves the divine-creaturely relation in a position where there is no possibility of an "active reception of the divine gift" on the part of humanity and thus, "no grace" but rather a divinely ordered vacuum that crushes all before it (387). Might not a properly conceived *analogia entis* offer relief from this Reformed separation of theology and philosophy? Webster's answer is a highly nuanced dogmatic response that includes some "rules of thumb" designed to enable a more catholic, sympathetic and yet critical approach to such proposals. These include a willingness to submit wholly and entirely to "the biblical canon" when describing the relationship that a perfect God might have to his creation (388). It also means that this primary biblical-material concern will not be subordinated to other secondary matters. Thus, "it is imprudent for dogmatics to expect too much from an inquiry into the metaphysics of the matter" (389). The formal content of the book appropriately ends with this wise suggestion and a brief exposition of a passage from Ephesians 1:3-14 to illustrate it. The upshot of the exposition is that the *analogia entis* is neither the "invention of the antichrist" nor the "wisdom of God." Perhaps the issue of analogy has indeed suffered from expecting too little and/or too much from it, after all. This is a sentiment that Richard Schenk seems to share in the epilogue when he suggests that both Barth and Przywara have "helped to show us the path of wisdom" (416).

This book certainly represents the most current version of the debate in its ecumenical form and is worth owning for that reason alone. It certainly represents a genuine ecumenical effort to come to grips with the debate since the Barth-Przywara correspondence. In that respect Father White has done an excellent job of arranging and introducing the book, even if the designation of each section is not always evenly reflected in all of the chapters they contain. Serious theologians of all persuasions should acquire this book; but be warned: it is not standard theological fare by any means.

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